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World AIDS Day was marked with different programmes and rallies across the country on Tuesday. In the Capital, a rally that started from Dasharath Stadium converged at the Khula Manch in Ratna Park, with representatives of different national and international organisations and school students participating in it.

At the programme, Minister for Health and Population Uma Kant Chaudhary said guaranteeing human rights and essential services to those living with HIV/AIDS were possible only with the help of all sections of society.

The National AIDS and Sexual Disease Control Centre also inaugurated a National AIDS Research Library at its premises in Teku on Tuesday. This is the first library related to HIV/AIDS research in the country.

In a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office, Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal said that in an under-developed country like Nepal, institutions such as NGOs, private sector, and the media play an important role in controlling the AIDS epidemic.

Similarly, a statement by the Charge d'Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Nepal, Randy W. Berry, said, "We do not celebrate World AIDS Day. Instead, we observe World AIDS Day to remind us of the millions of lives affected by HIV since it was first identified almost 30 years ago."

World AIDS Day was marked this year with the slogan 'Universal Access and Human Rights', focusing on the access of persons living with HIV/AIDS to facilities and medical access.

In another programme, four short clips on HIV/AIDS were screened at Madhyapur Thimi on Tuesday. The clips were narratives of those who had been infected with HIV, and sent out a public message on the importance of condoms.

Speaking at the function, Jay Bahadur Karki of the Public Health Office, Bhaktapur, said that awareness programmes on HIV/AIDS are important to disseminate information to the public. "Taking precaution helps to reduce accidents," he said.

At the programme, a street-play highlighted the importance of non-discrimination of those infected with HIV/AIDS.

According to government statistics, at least 14,787 cases of HIV infection were reported in Nepal as of October, of which 2,493 people have AIDS. Also, the age-group between 15 to 39 had the highest number of infections, with 11,319 cases.